

The Tinguian:
Social, Religious, and Economic Life
of a Philippine Tribe

by

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Introduction

It seems desirable, at the outset, to set forth certain general conclusions regarding the Tinguian and their neighbors. Probably no pagan tribe of the Philippines has received more frequent notice in literature, or has been the subject of more theories regarding its origin, despite the fact that information concerning it has been exceedingly scanty, and careful observations on the language and physical types have been totally lacking.

According to various writers, these people are descended from Chinese, Japanese, or Arabs; are typical Malay; are identical with the Igorot; are pacific, hospitable, and industrious; are inveterate head-hunters, inhospitable, lazy, and dirty. The detailed discussion of these assertions will follow later in the volume, but at this point I wish to state briefly the racial and cultural situation, as I believe it to exist in northwestern Luzon.

I am under the impression that at one time this whole region was inhabited by pygmy blacks, known as Aeta or Negrito, small groups of whom still retain their identity. With the coming of an alien people they were pressed back from the coasts to the less hospitable regions of the interior, where they were, for the most part, exterminated, but they intermarried with the invaders to such an extent that to-day there is no tribe or group in northwestern Luzon but shows evidence of intermixture with them. I believe that the newcomers were drawn from the so-called primitive Malay peoples of southeastern Asia; that in their movement eastward and northward they met with and absorbed remnants of an earlier migration made up of a people closely related to the Polynesians, and that the results of this intermixture are still evident, not only in Luzon, but in every part of the Archipelago.

In northern Luzon, I hold, we find evidences of at least two series of waves and periods of migration, the members of which are similar physical type and language. It appears, however, that they came from somewhat different localities of southeastern Asia and had, in their old homes, developed social organizations and other elements of culture radically different from one another—institutions and groupings which they brought with them to the Philippines, and which they have maintained up to the present time.

To the first series belong the Igorot¹ with their institutions of trial marriage; division of their settlements into social and political units known as *ato*; separate dormitories for unmarried men and women; government by the federated divisions of a village as represented by the old men; and a peculiar and characteristic type of dwelling.

In the second wave series we find the Apayo, the western division at least of the people known as Kalinga, the Tinguian, and Ilocano.² In none of these groups do we find the institutions just mentioned. Trial unions are unknown, and marriage restrictions are based solely on blood relationship; government is through the headman aided by the elders of his village, or is a pure democracy. Considerable variation exists between the dwellings of these four peoples, yet they conform to a general type which is radically different from that of the Igorot.

The Apayao and Kalinga divisions of this second wave series, by reason of their environment, their more isolated localities and consequent lack of frequent communication with the coast, have a simpler culture than that of the Tinguian; yet they have, during many generations, developed certain traits and institutions now apparently peculiar to them. The Tinguian and Ilocano, on the other hand, have had the advantages of outside communication of extensive trade, and the admixture of a certain amount of foreign blood.

These last two groups evidently left their ancient home as a unit, at a time prior to the Hindu domination of Java and Sumatra, but probably not until the influence of that civilization had begun to make itself felt. Traces of Indian culture are still to be found in the language, folklore, religion, and economic life of this people, while the native script which the Spanish found in use among the Ilocano seems, without doubt, to owe its origin to that source.

After reaching Luzon, this people slowly broke up into groups which spread out over the provinces of Ilocos Sur and Norte, Union and Abra. The partial isolation of some of these divisions, local feuds, the universal custom of head-hunting, and the need of human victims to accompany the spirits of the dead, all doubtless aided in separating the tribe into a number of dialect groups—groups which nevertheless retained the old culture to a surprising degree.

Long before the arrival of the Spanish, Chinese and Japanese traders were visiting the Ilocos coasts. We are also informed that merchants from Macao and India went there from time to time, while trade relations with Pangasinan and the Tagalog provinces were well developed.

The leavening influence of trade and contact with other peoples resulted in such advancement that this people was early mentioned as one of the six “civilized” tribes of the Philippines.

Upon the arrival of Salcedo, the greater portion of the coast people accepted the rule of Spain and the Christian religion, while the more conservative element retired to the interior, and there became merged with the mountain people. To the Spaniards, the Christianized natives became known as Ilocano, while the people of the mountain valleys were called Tinguian, or mountain dwellers.

If the foregoing sketch is correct, as I believe the data which follow prove it to be, we find in the Tinguian of today a people living much the same sort of life as did the members of the more advanced groups at the time of the Spanish invasion, and we can study in them early Philippine society stripped of its European veneer.

This second and concluding section of Volume XIV gives the greater part of the results of an investigation carried on by me with the assistance of Mrs. Cole among the Tinguian, from January, 1907, to June, 1908; the funds for which were furnished Field Museum of Natural History by the late Robert F. Cummings. The further generosity of Mrs. Cummings, in contributing a fund toward the printing of this publication is also gratefully acknowledged.

A collection of texts and a study of the language are contemplated for a separate volume, as is also the detailed treatment of the anthropometric data.

For the transcription of the phonograph records and the chapter on Music, I am indebted to Mr. Albert Gale. His painstaking analysis establishes beyond question the value of the phonograph as an aid in ethnographic research.

The photographs, unless otherwise noted, were taken by the author in the field.

1 The Bontoc Igorot is taken as one of the least influenced and most typical of the Igorot groups.

2 On this point see Cole, *The Distribution of the Non-Christian Tribes of Northwestern Luzon* (*American Anthropologist*, N.S., Vol. XI, 1909, pp. 329–347).

... The weapons of the warriors consist of a spear, head-axe, and shield, and the small bamboo spikes known as *soga*. They do not make use of the bow and arrow, although they have been credited as possessing them. The old men claim it has not been used in their lifetime, nor is mention made of it in the folk-tales. The only time it appears is in the crude weapons used in shooting fish in the rice-fields, and in the miniature bow and arrow, which hang above the heads of a newborn child.

Types of Knives.—Bolos, or long knives, are carried at the side suspended from the belt, and upon occasion may be used as weapons. However, they are generally considered as tools ([Fig. 7](#)).

Figure 7.



The Head-Axe, *aliwa* or *gaman* (see [Fig. 8](#)).—The axes made by the Tinguian and Kalinga are identical, probably due to the fact that the center of distribution, as well as the best iron work of this region, is found in Balbalasang—a town of mixed Tinguian and Kalinga blood. The blade is long and slender with a crescent-shape cutting edge on one end, and a long projecting spine on the other. This projection is strictly utilitarian. It is driven into the ground so as to support the blade upright, when it is desired to have both hands free to draw meat or other articles over the cutting edge. It is also driven into the soil, and acts as a support when its owner is climbing steep or slippery banks.

Figure 8.



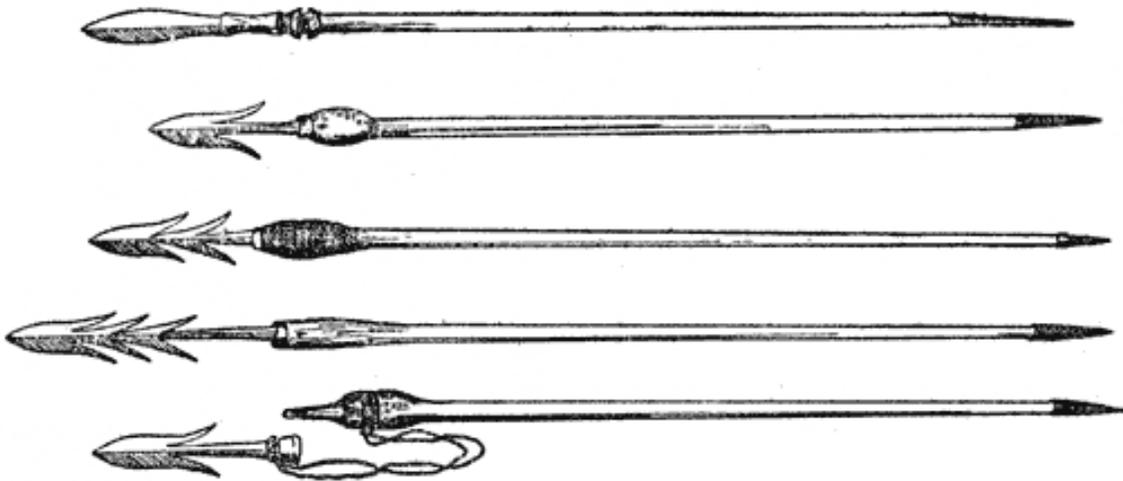
Head-Axes.

The blade fits into a long steel ferrule which, in turn, slips onto a wooden handle. The latter may be straight or plain, but commonly it has a short projection midway of its length, which serves as a finger-hold and as a hook for attachment to the belt. Quite frequently the handle is decorated with thin circles or bands of brass, while ornamental designs sometimes appear on the blade.

While the axe is primarily a weapon, its use is by no means confined to warfare. It is used in house and fence building, in cutting up game and forest products, and in many other ways. [Fig. 8](#) shows three types of head-axes, the first two, the Tinguian-Kalinga axe; third, the Igorot; fourth, the Apayao. There is a noticeable difference between the slender blades of the first group and the short, thick blade of the Igorot, yet they are of the same general type. The Apayao weapon, on the other hand, presents a radical difference in form. Despite these variations, the axes of these three tribes present an interesting problem. So far as it is known, these are the only tribes in the Philippines which make use of a head-axe, and it is believed that no similar weapon is found in the Malayan Islands. However, blades of striking resemblance do occur among the Naga of Assam. It is possible that the weapons of these far separated regions may hark back to a common source, from which they received their instruction in iron working.

The Spear, *pīka*.—The various types of spears used by the Tinguian are shown in [Fig. 9](#).

Figure 9.



A considerable part of these are made in the villages along the upper reaches of the Buklok river and in Balbalasang, but many come into Abra through trade with the Igorot and Kalinga. They are used for hunting and fighting, and are intended both as thrusting and throwing weapons. In the lowlands the older type of spear-head is a modified leaf shape, attached to a ferrule which slips over the shaft. In the mountains, heads with two or more barbs are set into the handles, and are held in place by means of wooden wedges and by metal rings which surround the ends of the shafts. A metal end or shoe covers the butt end of the weapon, thus converting it into an excellent staff for mountain climbing.

Occasionally a hunting spear is fitted with a detachable head, which will pull out of the socket when an animal is struck. The shaft is attached to the point by means of a heavy line, and as this drags through the undergrowth, it becomes entangled and thus delays the flight of the game.

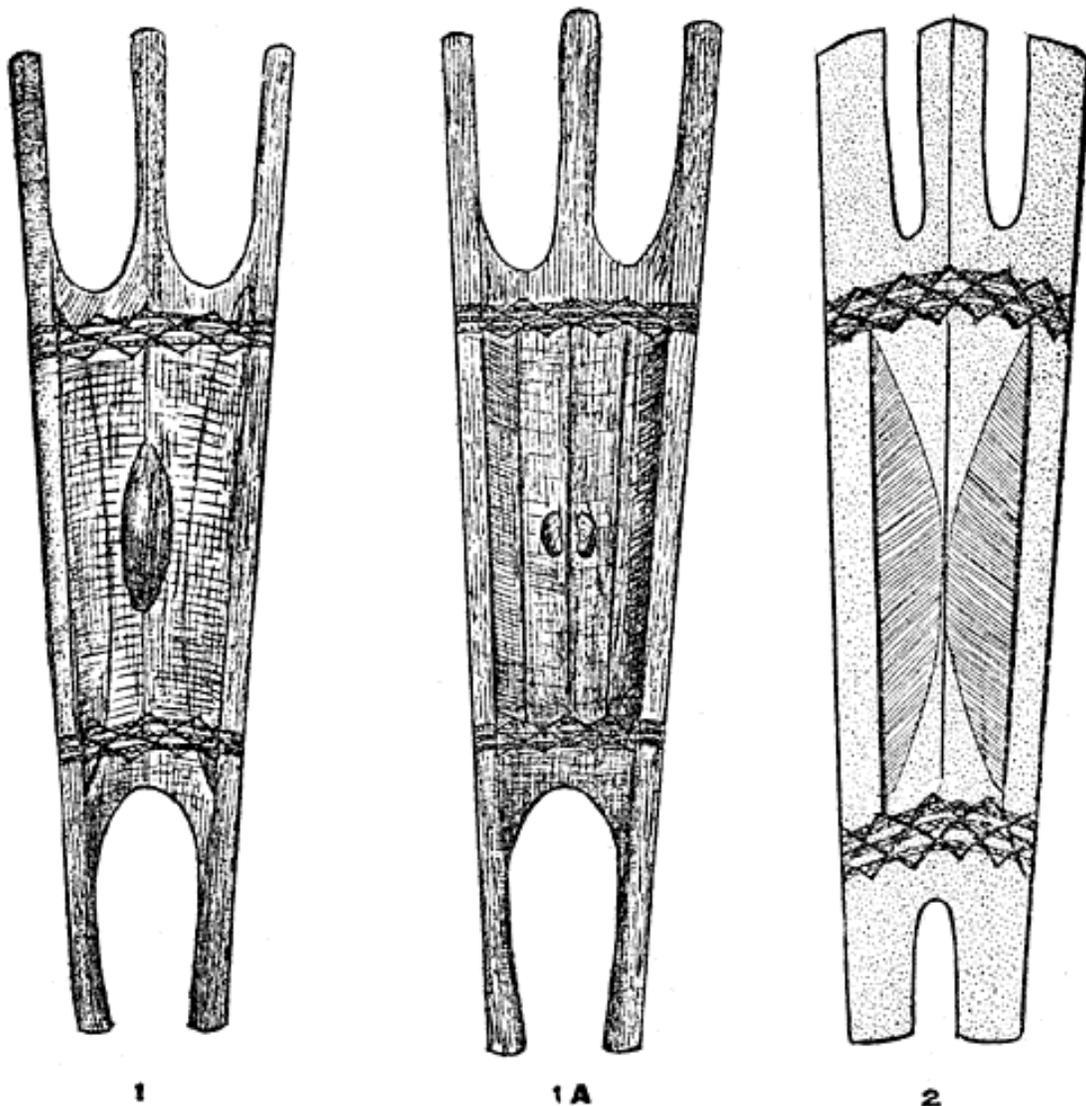
Shields, *kalásag*.—Mention has already been made of the typical Tinguian-Kalinga shield (cf. p. 373). While this is the common type of the region ([Fig. 10](#), Nos. 1–1a), others, which approach those of the Bontoc Igorot, are frequently used ([Fig. 10](#), No. 2). As a rule, these come from Balatok, Lubuagan, Guinaan and the villages along the Malokbot river, all of which are strongly influenced in blood and culture by the Igorot. In the latter shields we find the prongs at the top and bottom, but they are no longer of

sufficient size and opening to be of practical value. The clue to their origin is probably afforded us in their use by the Tinguian.

Across the top and bottom of each shield, near to the prongs, are two or three braided bands which appear to be ornamental, or to strengthen the weapon. Their real use, however, is to hold the *soga*, the pointed bamboo sticks which are planted in the grass to delay pursuers. A half dozen or more of these are usually to be found under the braiding at the back of the shield.

All shields are of very light wood, and can easily be pierced by a spear. They are intended to be used in deflecting missiles rather than actually to stop them. To aid in this purpose, there is a hand grip cut into the center of the back. This is large enough to admit the first three fingers, while the thumb and little finger are left outside to tilt the shield to the proper angle.

Figure 10.



Shields.